Hicks J, Uy M, Venter C. Introduction to 'Music and Landscape' special issue. *Journal of Musicology* 2016, **33**(1), 1-10.

Introduction: Music and Landscape

JONATHAN HICKS, MICHAEL UY, AND CARINA VENTER

The word landscape is exceptionally rich and complex: it can refer to environment, painting, gardening, and design. Yet the tendency to think in visual terms has led to a neglect of other equally vital ways of engaging with landscape, not least through sound and, more specifically, through music. The four essays in this issue originated in a conference held at Oxford in 2012.[1] Each author raises questions about the poetics and politics of particular landscapes; collectively their work represents an attempt to turn up the volume of landscape studies. Readers of this journal will already appreciate that our experience of the world includes an important sonic dimension: we orient ourselves acoustically as much as visually, and the habitual use of spatial metaphors in describing musical works and performances suggests that our aesthetic discourse is, at some level, grounded in such sensory knowledge. Nevertheless, the discipline of musicology has only recently begun to address the substantial literature on landscape in art history and cultural geography. We hope these essays will become a catalyst for further research.

Perhaps the scholarly hush surrounding music and landscape was to be expected: of all the geographical terms available to music studies, landscape is at once the most obvious and the most obscure. On the one hand, it can be understood in a colloquial sense as the countryside or pictures thereof, in which case it requires little further explanation. On the other hand, it can lead to conundrums about the relationship between objects and their means of representation. The idea of place, in contrast, has proved more applicable and more amenable; as a geographical surrogate for the politics of identity, place has been readily accommodated into

[1] The conference developed into a research network led by Daniel M. Grimley and funded by the Leverhulme Trust. For further details, see hearinglandscapecritically.net.

The Journal of Musicology, Vol. 33, Issue 1, pp. 1–10, ISSN 0277-9269, electronic ISSN 1533-8347. DOI: 10.1525/JM.2016.33.1.1

ethnographic and historical accounts of the "music in . . . " variety.[2] Similarly, the term soundscape, which emerged from the acoustic environmental movement, has now entered mainstream scholarly vocabulary.[3] We can also point to a number of spatial turns in the psychology, theory, and sociology of music.[4]

So what, precisely, is to be gained by attending to music and landscape? In this brief introduction, we sketch a series of answers to this question: first, by considering the distinctions between auditory and visual notions of landscape; second, by noting the importance of landscape in historical debates about music and representation; third, by drawing attention to the modes of occupation and exploitation set to work through landscape and challenged by a restitutive decolonial aesthetics; and last, by suggesting the common ground between recent work in musicology and cultural geography.

***

If musicology has to date shown relatively little interest in what geographers and art historians have to say about landscape, that does not mean the topic has been absent from our discipline. On the contrary, some of the best-thumbed chapters in Western music history read like case studies in environmental aesthetics. "The figure who dramatizes the Arcadian landscape," writes Daniel K. L. Chua, "is Orpheus, the son of Apollo, the god of music."[5] Chua's rhetoric is marked by reiteration: "[Orpheus] is the one who undulates the landscape with the drones of his lyre; his song is the eco-system of the enchanted world. Music is the magic that makes the pastoral." It seems appropriate that an Orphic text should effect such an echo, for what better means is there to register both the presence of sound in landscape and the shaping of landscape in sound?

In the case of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607), the famous Act 5 lament takes place within earshot of an offstage voice, Eco (Echo), who returns the hero's words in an altered and partial state. It does not take a great

[2] Tim Carter dates the start of the "music in . . . " trend to the early 1980s. See Tim Carter, "The Sound of Silence: Models for an Urban Musicology," *Urban History* 29 (2002): 8–18.

[3] R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977).

[4] Examples include Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E. T. A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Georgina Born, ed., *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[5] Daniel K. L. Chua, "Vincenzo Galilei, Modernity and the Division of Nature," in *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century,* ed. Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.

leap of imagination to hear this scene as an operatic landscape, nor to suggest that such a landscape has more than objective properties. As Orfeo pours out his heart in song, the natural surroundings attune to his suffering: he seeks compassion in plant life and sympathy in geology; his eyes are fountains of tears, fit to flood a sea of weeping. The work raises fundamental questions about the relationship between the living subject and the apparently external world, questions that are central to what cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove once called "the idea of landscape."[6]

For Cosgrove, the landscape idea was characterized by two key ambiguities, of subject/object and individual/social. Building on the Marxist visual theory of John Berger, Cosgrove defined landscape as "a way of seeing—a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relations with it."[7] It is worth noting that the first of the "Europeans" addressed in Cosgrove's influential study were the social and cultural elites of the city-states of Renaissance Italy, the very same elites who attended and debated early opera. And, although Cosgrove's book focuses on pictures and gardens rather than music and theatre, Monteverdi does make an appearance alongside a claim that "[the Italian] baroque townscape is best described as operatic."[8] We might thus wish to supplement Cosgrove's idea of landscape as a way of seeing with *Orfeo*'s staging of landscape as a way of hearing or, better still, as a way of singing.

Yet we should be cautious about reading too much into this apparent coming together of operatic and geographic concerns. The all-too-physical nature of landscape has long been a sore point in music criticism. Without the scaffolding of classical allusion or early modern humanism—the *et in arcadia eco* we might wish to hear in Orfeo's not-quite-solo soliloquy—we are left with something like a manufactured resonance, a mere trick of the musical trade. Many of the most successful concert bands have excelled at dynamic contrast and atmospheric effects: from the sky-rockets and birds of the Mannheim School, to Philippe Musard's pan-European quadrille hit, "les Echos," to the delay pedals used in U2's stadium-filling soft rock (the 1987 album *The Joshua Tree* springs to mind), the ability to reproduce real-world acoustic phenomena in a confined performance arena has been, among other things, a mark of a lack of aesthetic sophistication. Though there are, of course, other means of rendering musical landscape besides whizz-bangs and reverb, it is important to acknowledge a persistent critical anxiety about the production of space in sound.

[6] See Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984/1998), esp. ch. 1, "The Idea of Landscape."
[7] Ibid., 1.
[8] Ibid., 157.

In fact, few debates have left more of a trace in our disciplinary discourse than the problem of painting in tones. And few clichés of historiography have been more enduring than that of an opposition between absolute and programmatic works. Landscape, we suggest, has been more central to these arguments than we tend to acknowledge. As the cultural geographer George Revill has observed, "relationships between abstraction and depiction in music continue to shape the ways in which conceptions of nature and culture are brought together in musical landscapes."[9] He also points out how landscape has been lumped with other "so-called 'extra-musical associations' [that] have conventionally been frowned upon."[10] Revill's response is to trace two compositional lineages in which landscape has nevertheless been remarkably prominent. One, broadly romantic, leads from Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture* (1830) to Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* (1915) via the nationally inflected works of Smetana, Grieg, and Sibelius, et al. The other, broadly experimental tradition, begins with the mid-twentieth-century field recordings of R. Murray Schafer and Hildegard Westerkamp and takes in the cartographically derived works of contemporary English composer Sam Richards (b. 1949). Though Revill implies a separation between these two modes of composition—the romantic and the experimental—the distinction is not necessarily strict; and a more nuanced historiography might address points of confluence and conversation.

Working in the other disciplinary direction, Joshua S. Walden opens his introduction to *Representation in Western Music* by discussing a set of images by German artist Max Klinger "depicting mythic figures and dramatic landscapes inspired by [Brahms's] music."[11] One image in particular, titled *Accorde* (Chords, ca. 1894), receives both a facsimile and a verbal summary: "On the right edge of the print, in the corner of a bourgeois parlour, Klinger himself sits in profile, playing the piano. To his left, the room's walls have disappeared . . . revealing a stormy seascape and craggy island terrain." Walden reads this fantastical scene as "a depiction of the mental representation conjured in Klinger's imagination by Brahms's music," noting both a harp-playing nymph ("a reminder, perhaps, of Orpheus's lyre") and a sailboat that "appears to stand in for the listener, navigating across the virtual musical landscape." Significantly, this last phrase recurs in the final line of Walden's introduction, in which he summarizes part of Richard Taruskin's contribution to the same

[9] George Revill, "Landscape, Music and the Cartography of Sound," in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies,* ed. Peter Howard, Ian Thompson, and Emma Waterton (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 234.

[10] Ibid., 231.

[11] Joshua S. Walden, *Representation in Western Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

volume: "Through the study of affordance and representation . . . we can better understand how we are moved by music, and are inspired to move along with it, as we negotiate our way across these virtual musical landscapes."[12]

What is striking here is not that a book about music's representational capacities gives passing prominence to pictorial and metaphorical landscapes, but rather that it does so without subjecting the idea of landscape to sustained investigation. This is especially important given the distinctions at play between different uses of the same word.[13] Walden notes Klinger's insistence that his images "were not 'illustrations,' but something more introspective and interpretive." This defensive move—from landscape as illustration to landscape as imagination—is typical of the discourse surrounding pictures in or of music. Walden gives the impression that such arguments have been confined to the past and that representation is no longer a taboo subject: "[The nineteenth-century] understanding of music's autonomy, of its abstraction from the social worlds of its listeners, has by today lost most of its adherents." Yet there remains something cagey about his qualification of musical landscapes as virtual, as if Klinger's distancing strategy remains active, even at the point that it is declared historically obsolete.

Taruskin's rebuttal of the extra-musical comes to mind: "Why should musicologists be the last to hold on to this squeamish habit? Is the face in a portrait 'extra-artistic'? Is the plot of a novel 'extra-literary'?"[14] By the same token we might ask whether landscapes performed with instruments are any more virtual than those portrayed in oils or written in prose or, for that matter, landscapes driven through in cars. The question is rhetorical but the answer bears repeating: much of the value of the landscape idea lies in its refusal of sharp distinctions between the virtual and the real. As New Historicism in literary theory has for some time shown, representations both reflect and construct our sense of the world. For Cosgrove this meant interrogating the role of maps and surveys in mediating relations of property and labor. An aurally sensitive geographer might hear echoes and crashing waves in relation to a sense of belonging

[12] Ibid., 10.

[13] Four other authors in the same volume mention landscape: Marina Frolova-Walker uses the term to refer to the totality of music-making in a given place ("the Soviet musical landscape," p. 47) and the artificiality of a given genre ("the flat, cardboard landscape of Socialist Realism," p. 56); Nicholas Cook mentions the "urban landscape outside" (p. 86) shown in a music video; Karol Berger, writing of Hans Jürgen Syberberg's 1982 film *Parsifal*, describes the "scenic landscape" (p. 182) that turns out to be Wagner's death mask; and W. Anthony Sheppard quotes the composer John Adams saying that he employed the chorus in *Nixon in China* "largely to evoke the enormity of the landscape and the mystery of China's past" (p. 274).

[14] Richard Taruskin, "Review: Speed Bumps," *19th-Century Music* 29 (2005): 201.

or dislocation. Or, to return to Klinger's image, we might consider how the dream of being cast adrift, inspired and intensified by Brahms's music, related to the domestic space Walden calls a "bourgeois parlour."

Crucially, the intimate spaces of bourgeois cultivation—the parlour, the garden—presuppose and reinforce asymmetric social relations. Both the shaping and representation of land partake in what Cosgrove calls the "imperial spatiality of centre and frontier," the figuration of "a landscape of self and home by othering people and places."[15] For an understanding of what imperialist spatiality does to nature, native peoples, and their land, we might turn to the work of Frantz Fanon. "Hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious," he wrote, "is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, by mosquitoes, natives and fever, and colonisation is a success when all this indocile nature has finally been tamed."[16] Richard Leppert has in turn demonstrated the extent to which music has imbibed this project, arguing that the visual representation of domestic music-making drowned out the brutality of colonial rule by erasing it from the painted canvas, on which is substituted an aestheticized and distinctly European imaginary: "Harmony, Unity, Order, and (by association) Peace."[17]

Such depictions of music's capacity to tame and harmonize suggest a return to the myth with which we introduced the topic of music and landscape. Chua writes of the Orphic lyre that it "colonises the landscape with its harmonies, modulating the brutality of nature into the grace of culture."[18] But Orpheus, too, had his day of reckoning with the law-defying forces of decolonization: an encounter with the unbridled musical rage of a band of female savages that cost him his head, and his instrument. Ever since Jean-Paul Sartre evoked the persona of a black Orpheus in his preface to a 1948 volume of French and African poetry edited by Leopold Senghor, artists and critics have read back into Ovid's myth the promise of new life through decolonization.[19] "Fury and Apocalypse," writes Kimberly Bentson, "are the obsessions of the Afro-American's Orphic imagination," which she finds at work in the formal

[15] Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001), 17.

[16] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, tr. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 201.

[17] Richard D. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 95.

[18] Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29.

[19] See Saadi A. Simawe, ed., *Black Orpheus: Music in African and American Fiction from the Harlem Renaissance to Toni Morrison* (New York: Garland, 2000); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, tr. S. W. Allen (Paris: Présence Africane, 1963); and Peter Benson, *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986);

and harmonic transgressions of 1960s new wave jazz, and especially in the late works of John Coltrane.[20] The apotheosis of this emancipative rage might be glimpsed in a more recent intervention by South African hip-hop group Dookoom (Outcast): Dane Dodds's video for their 2014 "Larney, Jou Poes" (Cape Flats slang roughly meaning "master, fuck you") shows farm workers rising up against centuries of legally sanctioned exploitation of land and labor.[21] After close-ups of the rappers performing, then setting fire to farmland and machinery, the coda to the video has the camera zoom out as a white farmer gazes out at the name of the group, Dookoom, emblazoned on the hillside.

If these examples draw attention to the postcolonial politics of landscape and music aesthetics, we might also identify general concerns shared by musicology, landscape studies, and cultural geography. Just as philosophers of music grapple with the ontology of an ephemeral act carrying shifting emotional and socio-political significance, so do geographers see new ways of conceptualizing the relationship between people and land. In John Wylie's work, for instance, landscape is not a thing that can be grasped, nor a fixed object available for depiction, but a dynamic totality characterized by relationships of tension.[22] Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's notions of corporeal knowledge and Heidegger's enquiries into "being-in-the-world," writers such as Wylie and the social anthropologist Timothy Ingold are more interested in landscape as a field of experience than any putative notion of the landscape itself. From the point of view of musicology, their work is suggestive for the ways it brings together a sensitivity to what cannot be represented with an alertness to the material and phenomenological conditions in which more-than-representable experience takes place.

This folding together of phenomenological and material concerns makes landscape a key topic for the study of power. And, from the point of view of cultural geography, musicology has a great deal to add, not least because of an established tradition within the discipline of attending to the ebb and flow of temporal sensation. Despite the myriad subtleties of Wylie's phenomenology, landscape emerges in his writing as something seen and not heard. Given the importance of tension in his worldview, it is tempting to ask how the metaphor of harmony, which has been operative for centuries in discussions of gardening, wilderness, and environmentalism, might challenge and politicize the scopic bias of his theoretical vision. This is only one of many possible

[20] Kimberly W. Bentson, "Late Coltrane: a re-membering of Orpheus," *The Massachusetts Review* 18 (1977): 771.

[21] The music video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmgpDostEqk (accessed 16 June 2015).

[22] John Wylie, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007).

examples; in the essays that follow we find both a continuation of these general methodological discussions and more focused questions about music-landscape relations in four very different sets of circumstances.

***

In the first essay, Daniel Grimley considers musical representation, place, and memory in a reading of Frederick Delius's *The Song of the High Hills* (1911) that draws insights from Henri Bergson's philosophy of duration. For Grimley, this music throws into disarray any straightforward notion of teleology and closure, shunning as well the Cartesian surfaces of two-dimensional pictorial representation. Rather, its gyratic formal designs—alternating and imbricating rhapsody, idyll, and Hill Song—and rotating harmonic scheme are constitutive of a "complex multi-parametrical hybrid, a single sustained movement that combines elements of different genres, formal shapes, and harmonic processes." Grimley also considers Delius's social relations with the high hills of his title at a time when Nordic territory was sold as a picturesque site for tours and recreation: Norway became the Switzerland of the North or the Switzerland by the sea. This same landscape, he suggests, became "nothing more than a playground for the colonial imagination," undercut only momentarily by the acoustic grain of the landscape, in moments when the listener or stroller is jolted out of generic fantasy into a grasp of the landscape in its present specificity.

The capacity of landscapes to implant into national consciousness the aesthetic proclivities and cultural customs belonging to another place and time is also central to Stephanus Muller's contribution. Muller considers how landscapes of geoaesthetic conceit were made and heard in the folksy songs of the Afrikaner composer Stephanus le Roux Marais. This small-town figure, Muller argues, was a paragon of insignificance, setting texts in the ethnically cleansed Afrikaans that were meant to distinguish the white Afrikaners from the so-called colored communities in South Africa. Despite, or perhaps because of, his technical shortcomings, Marais became a leading contributor to the repertoire of the Afrikaner Volk—a composer of bad music gone viral in the madness that was apartheid. On a theoretical level, Marais's oeuvre invites us to rethink the Deleuzian notion of the minor. For Muller, "Marais's songs . . . maintain the imperial, colonial gaze, the South African picturesque so important to settler communities. Their lack of . . . minority constructions—their 'correctness'—allowed white settler populations to feel culturally embedded." For all its Eurocentric references to waltzes and drawing-room ballads, Marais's music is devoid of interruption or transgression; nothing undermines the flawless grammar of common practice. In contrast to

the arresting plenitude Grimley finds in Delius's *Song*, Muller identifies in Marais's landscapes a radical lack of specificity.

The essays by Joseph Browning and David Blake provide later twentieth-century examples that can illustrate geographer Don Mitchell's idea of "the political economy of landscape."[23] As Mitchell argues, "one of the things the landscape is *for*. . . is the establishment of patterns of circulation, patterns of production and reproduction . . . patterns of crops and labor that are *profitable*."[24] In the examples discussed by Browning and Blake we see how the circulation of musical performers and recordings provides another means of extracting value from the land. Clearly the labor of producing and reproducing music raises different questions from the agricultural practices mentioned by Mitchell, but profitability and power remain central concerns. The challenges involved in understanding music's commercial relations with landscape are made even more apparent when we consider recent technological developments in broadcasting, networking, and file sharing, which promise a global market for recordings marked as local or site-specific.

Joseph Browning's examination of the packaging of shakuhachi music—album titles, tracks, covers, and liner notes—suggests that the reception of the instrument, a form of bamboo flute, has been shaped by its natural surroundings. In describing this process, Browning argues that the idea of landscape can be understood as both the shakuhachi's authentic sound-source and a means of commodifying the instrument for symbolic circulation. His analysis describes the "emergence of a global shakuhachi imaginary" by considering recordings made inside and outside of Japan, extending to a cloister in a Czech monastery and a resonant cave in Australia. Browning further argues that part of the significance of these packaged landscapes, beyond their ability to evoke specific scenes, is their participation in a shared constellation of imagery associated with the shakuhachi. Thus the idea of assemblage in this analysis encourages us to reevaluate aspects of agency, creativity, and differential power dynamics in the global musical scene.

David Blake's article also considers the relationships among recordings, landscape, and music, but with a different focus on the problems of authenticity, rurality, and academic discourse. He reveals the ways members of the University of Illinois Campus Folksong Club (CFC) worked to establish the authenticity of their folksong performers through a battle of cultural hierarchies. Blake thus demonstrates the power of universities to shape "the representation of musical practices within geographic

[23] Don Mitchell, "Dead Labor and the Political Economy of Landscape—California Living, California Dying," in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile, and Nigel Thrift (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 241.

[24] Ibid., 240.

settings." Critically examining a field that has long been neglected, Blake argues that universities are "meaningful places whose practices accrue cultural value through their specific emplacement"—rural Illinois, in this example. This leads him to address those musical "practices that reflect and shape the socioeconomic geographies and cultural landscapes of both campus and community." At stake are issues of educational *Bildung*, cultural uplift, and sociocultural outreach, as well as "the pursuit of an authentic folk music interpreted through the guise of landscape." Ultimately, Blake's and Browning's analyses are linked by a preoccupation with the problems of representing an imagined landscape-authenticity. The operational dynamics of representation are what eventually return us to questions of power.

These essays raise questions that could fruitfully inform future work on music and landscape. How, for instance, has the capitalist system of privatization complicated the ways in which music, sound, and noise leak over, creep, permeate, and reconfigure private boundaries and properties established by law and occupation? How has the collision of different regimes of sonic propriety been accelerated by globalizing technologies? Music and landscape have long played important roles in nationalist and (post-)colonial projects. Though we in musicology may be familiar with the place of landscape in debates about representation, mimicry, and programmaticism, the literature on landscape from other disciplines provides an opportunity to foreground the complexities of the material world. In practice, landscape will inevitably overlap with terms like place, space, and soundscape, but it is the picturesque yet grounded prefix—land—that remains most provocative for a field of study that has, historically, been ill at ease with music's many and varied materialities.